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HOUSE BILL 2131

By Cooper B

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 3, Part 7, relative to extension of the healthy start program.

WHEREAS, over 20 years of national research and experience establish that home visitation programs have been highly effective in providing high risk families with support to promote healthy development of young children; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee healthy start program, which began in 1994 and which emphasizes the nationally recognized model of home visitation, has proven effective in enhancing the developmental success of participating Tennessee children; and

WHEREAS, such programs have a proven track record of cost effectiveness by reducing reliance upon state supported programs for out-of-home placement for abused and neglected children and through early provision of preventative health and developmental services; and

WHEREAS, extension of the healthy start program to all counties in Tennessee is a high priority of the General Assembly; now therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 3, Part 7, is amended by adding Sections 2 and 3 of this Act as new, appropriately designated sections.

SECTION 2. (a) The pilot program created by this part shall be extended to ten (10) additional counties during fiscal year 2000-2001.

(b) The reports required by this part shall also present longitudinal statistics for each informational area required under Section 37-3-703(d). Information gathered and evaluations performed after the effective date of this Act shall occur so as to develop data for long-term assessments of the effectiveness of this program.

(c) In providing healthy start services, the state or its contractor shall emphasize coordination among state agencies and programs that provide developmental and health-related services to families and children. The state or its contractor shall also support TennCare participating families in accessing services, especially early, periodic, screening, diagnosis and treatment ("EPSDT") services for children.

SECTION 3. The department of children's services, with cooperation from the department of health, shall, by January 15, 2001, create a plan for future extension of the healthy start program to the entire state. Such plan shall specify actions to achieve coordination among state agencies and programs that provide developmental and health-related services to families and children.

SECTION 4. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 37-3-703(d), is amended by adding the following as a new, appropriately designated subdivision:

() Among those children identified in subdivision (2), the number of children who have been adjudicated delinquent or unruly;

SECTION 5. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 37-3-703(d), is further amended by adding the language "the chair of the children and family services committee of the house of representatives;" before the words "and the chair of the select committee".

SECTION 6. Implementation of the provisions of this Act shall be subject to funding being provided in the general appropriations act.

SECTION 7. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.